CONSIDERATIONS

ON

FALSE AND REAL

ALARMS.

BY COLONEL NORMAN MACLEOD, M. P.

DEDICATED

WITH SINCERE AND AFFECTIONATE RESPECT

TO

THE EARL OF LAUDERDALE.

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ON

THE RISE AND REIGN

OF

ALARMS.

By CAPTAIN NORMAN MACLEOD, M.P.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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LONDON:

DEDICATION.

My Lord,

Having neither the abilities or leiſure to execute a long work, or one deſerving much of your Lordſhip's attention, yet permit me to offer you a few pages, as a mark of that affectionate reſpect with which I have the honour to be

Your Lordſhip's obliged

and faithful Servant

NORMAN MACLEOD.

St. Alban-ſtreet,
March 13, 1794.

BRITISH MUSEUM

CONSIDERATIONS

ON

FALSE AND REAL

ALARMS.

AT this very awful period, when the opinions of men reſpecting their moſt important intereſts are running into the moſt contrary extremes, when theſe opinions are not left to the diſcuſſions of ſenates or of writers, but are fatally conſigned to the deciſion of the ſword; when Europe is plunged into, what may be called, an inexpiable war; when the queſtion ſeems to be whether the nations, under the pretext of eſtabliſhing, and reſtoring liberty, are to be involved in anarchy and confuſion, or, under the more favoured idea of preſerving government and order, they are to ſink beneath a military deſpotiſm; an humble but im-

partial attempt to reaſon on this unprecedented and intereſting ſituation of the world, may not be unacceptable.

It is not my intention to detail the views of courts, the characters of kings, or miniſters, or the exiſtence and tendencies of treaties; I mean only to diſtinguiſh between the cauſes of *Falſe and Real Alarms*, by a few conſiderations on the political and philoſophical effects which the preſent dreadful conteſt is likely to produce among mankind; and afterwards to examine its probable bearings on our own country.

It has long been the boaſt of Engliſhmen that they are the only Free People on Earth; that their conſtitution is nearly as perfect as human nature can bear, and it is thought that this perſuaſion has induced and enabled them to make exertions in war infinitely beyond their intrinſic or comparative ſtrength. They have alſo been uſed to indulge themſelves in a ſort of generous pity, or inſolent contempt, when they beheld the tame ſubmiſſion of other nations to more abſolute governments; and it is not one of the leaſt remarkable circumſtances of the preſent day, that this grand characteriſtic, this leading feature of our countrymen, ſeems to have totally diſappeared.

Formerly

Formerly there exiſted a fondneſs and predilection for thoſe ſtates which affected a Republican Conſtitution; to this feeling, Holland has been much indebted; and it was long faſhionable to ſend our noble youth to Geneva and Swiſſerland. Lately the very name of *Republic* is fallen into diſeſteem; obedience, order, ſubordination, diſparity of ranks, ſubmiſſion to ſuperiors, non-reſiſtance to the powers that be, are grown the favourite doctrines in this iſland; and if a whig of the reigns of King William or Queen Anne was now to ſhew his head among us, he would immediately hide it in aſtoniſhment and ſorrow, to find his old principles completely vaniſhed, and the tenets of his adverſaries perfectly triumphant.

If he liſtened to our recent political converſations, his natural concluſion would be, that we are become ſo ſelfiſhly enamoured of that portion of liberty which we have enjoyed, that we grudge the leaſt particle of it to our neighbours; and that we ſo much admire its flame, which burnt ſo brightly in his time, that we are determined to cover it with a dark and impenetrable lanthorn, that it never may ſhine on any other people.

This prodigious change of ſentiment in a free, a generous, and enlightened Nation, though it is one of the moſt remarkable phænomena of human nature, may however be accounted for on principles not entirely derogatory to the Engliſh character. Their ſympathies have been awakened, their pity has been raiſed, and their feelings have been wrought upon, by the moſt fatal errors of a neighbouring nation, and by moſt exquiſite deſign in other men; and cool reflecting minds will ſoon ceaſe to wonder at the ſtupendous conſequences of theſe combined cauſes.

The violent and bloody proceedings of the demagogues who have ſeized the powers of government in France, their revolutionary tribunals and decrees, and their attempts to fraternize the countries into which they have penetrated, have inſpired a general horror throughout Europe, and have given an opportunity to the favourers of regal tyranny to urge to the people of their reſpective ſtates, that they will find no refuge from maſſacre and pillage in the Temple of Liberty, but that they muſt fly for ſhelter to the thrones of Deſpotiſm, and ſeek for ſafety under the ſhadow

ſhadow of regular and mercenary armies. Kings, emperors, and miniſters in all countries *but our own*, have greedily improved this notion; and it is now the received and prevalent opinion, that the ſafety of *all* depends on the extinction of the National Convention of France, by external force, or by internal convulſion. It is therefore become the ſuppoſed duty of all governments to ſacrifice without limitation, and with the moſt unbounded profuſion, the blood and treaſure of their ſubjects in a proſcriptive, exterminating war, and, *per fas aut nefas*, to excite commotions in that unhappy country.

Without arguing on the virtue of this ſyſtem, and before I venture either to combat, or approve of it, I wiſh to examine a little the probability of its ſucceſs; and I wiſh to do this, rather on general grounds, than by any invidious appeal to the miſconduct, or misfortune of paſt campaigns, or by any alarming reference to the preſent ſtate of the armies. A ſhort, a very ſhort ſpace indeed, will intervene between my preſent writing and their mortal arbitrement! wives, mothers, fathers, friends, may now begin to tremble, for wherever the juſtice of the cauſe may be, human blood muſt flow in torrents! and here it is

ſome comfort to know, that the Britiſh Army in Flanders does not conſiſt of more than five or ſix thouſand of our fellow ſubjects.

I think it may be laid down as a principle incontrovertible that in the preſent equally diffuſed knowledge of all the ſcientific and practical branches of the Art of War, no aſſemblage of detached armies from different ſtates can penetrate, conquer, and reduce to ſubmiſſion an *Armed Nation* of the ſize and population of France; and thoſe who hold a contrary opinion ſeem to my poor judgement to commit the ſame ſort of error as he who ſhould ſay that four was greater than twelve. Aſk any reflecting military man, whether four hundred thouſand men can beat one or two millions; then aſk a ſtateſman, how many more than four hundred thouſand men will the Allies be able to bring into operation againſt France, and what are the numbers which will be oppoſed to them; the anſwer will be ſhort and deciſive.

In former barbarous ages we read of whole nations moving with their wives and children, and all their property, in ſearch of new ſettlements: I will not

contend

contend that if all the nations of Europe were to take this reſolution, and move, according to the new phraſe, in maſſes, into France, they might not cruſh, after much ſlaughter, the preſent inhabitants; though even the ſucceſs of this ſort of cruſade may be doubted: but ſurely this is not the modern mode of war. It may therefore be fairly ſtated that the Allied Army, or Armies, are only detachments from their nations; of ſmall comparative numbers; ſeparated from their natural and great bodies, exiſting at an immoderate expence; different in their views and habits; ſupplied in all their eſſential wants from their ſeveral countries or *from Great Britain*; dependent on theſe countries for every neceſſary; fearful and incapable of movement without difficult and far-fetched ſupply; *acting from diſcipline not paſſion*; feeling no particular intereſt of their reſpective countries in the *ſucceſs* of the war; knowing that neither they or their deareſt relations expect or can receive any advantage by it; and this, if admitted to be the condition of that army, (I ſpeak only of the Germans, for our troops are too few to be conſidered) what is it againſt an *Armed Nation?*

If we conſider fairly the different poſſible terminations to this war, they are as follow:

1ſt. The French may be completely ſubdued; an abſolute monarchy may be forced upon them; their nobility and clergy may be reſtored; and ſome of their fineſt Provinces may be diſmembered in favour of the pious and diſintereſted Allies, who are to effect this beneficent and holy Counter Revolution.

2d. The French may be ſo victorious as to dictate the terms of peace to all Europe; to eſtabliſh a popular government on the moſt ſolid baſis; and then it will be dreaded by all the exiſting governments, that the pernicious doctrines of liberty and equality, being taſted and enjoyed by a large portion of mankind, may become too prevalent and faſhionable. I ſhall endeavour afterwards to ſhew that this laſt effect is not likely to extend to Great Britain.

3dly. The war may be protracted to ſuch a length, and it may become ſo painful to both the contending parties, that wearineſs may enſue. Men may grow deſirous of relaxation from mutual deſtruction, and nations may be left, for a time, to manage their own affairs in their own ſeveral ways; and before I go further I will take the liberty of ſaying, that this laſt reſult is in my opinion the moſt probable.

From

From the firſt of theſe caſes, from the poſſibility of the total *ſubjugation* of France, and the reſtoration of abſolute Monarchy, aggravated by the inſolence of conqueſt, and by the neceſſity and cruelty of revenge, my reaſon diſſents, and my ſoul revolts; no man of tolerable humanity can deſire it; no man can wiſh to ſee the terrible ſcenes of retaliation which muſt certainly happen, or the extinction and overthrow of all the beſt principles of human nature which muſt inevitably follow. If it is once eſtabliſhed by force, by a combination of Princes, ſupported by mercenary armies, that no nation is to alter its own government and conſtitution, unleſs that alteration ſhall deviate from freedom, and tend to ſubmiſſion, there is an end to the happineſs, improvement, and increaſe of the human race. Againſt this ſuppoſition, though God has endued me with very little eloquence, I think I could be eloquent, but I abſtain from the ſubject from ſeveral reaſons: firſt, becauſe the total ſubjugation of France, and the reſtoration of its old government, is completely impoſſible, and therefore I ſhould be fighting againſt a chimerical windmill of my own imagination; and ſecondly, becauſe I ſincerely think, that no man in this country believes in the poſſibility of ſuch an event, and that very few even wiſh for it.

Now

Now let us view the probable conſequences of the victory of the French arms over thoſe of the Allies, and of the neceſſary retreat of the latter from the territories of the new Republic. On the poſſibility of this event, the *alarm* has been founded; it is in this expectation that all the old women in Europe have been thrown into hyſterics, and to prevent it, all the young men have been ſent to bleed and periſh. After ſo great an effect already produced, it may ſeem hazardous, and even preſumptuous, to aſſert, that the eſtabliſhment of liberty in France would be beneficial to many parts of Europe, perfectly innocent towards this country, and, on the whole, extremely favourable to the intereſts of mankind, and yet I am hardy enough to maintain theſe poſitions.

I muſt here recall the attention of the reader to the different and oppoſite principles of *invaſion* and *defence*, of *detachments*, and of *maſſes*, of *armies*, and of *armed nations*; and it is remarkable, that the hiſtory of this preſent war, as far as it has gone, proves and illuſtrates my theory on this ſubject.

Invading armies, be they never ſo ſtrong, be they as numerous as all the ſtates and kingdoms of Europe can afford to detach from their agriculture, manufac-

tures,

tures, and commerce, are nothing but detachments acting againſt a ſtrong, ſolid, and collected body, when they invade a *nation*; and the grand fatal error of the Cabinets of the Allies is, that they have reaſoned on the examples of former wars, when detachments fought againſt detachments for trifling, inconſiderable objects: and they have not reflected, that this ſort of warfare is quite different from the attack upon a great nation, with a view to total conqueſt or extermination.—When, therefore, I heard miniſters gravely argue, that the laſt campaign was as ſucceſsful as moſt firſt campaigns in former wars, if I had allowed them the fact (which is ſomewhat doubtful) I muſt have laughed at the inference. The acquiſition of a few towns, or an iſland or two, the deſtruction of a fleet, or the eſtabliſhment of ſome branch of commerce, were the objects of former wars, and might, perhaps, be obtained by five or ſix ſuch campaigns as the laſt; but no man will venture to ſay, that the ſucceſſes of laſt year have approximated the conqueſt of France. Our ſtateſmen, too, ſeem to have thrown entirely out of the account the effects of enthuſiaſm for liberty; but above all, the poignant abſolute neceſſity which the great body of the people of France muſt feel to maintain to deſperation their new eſtabliſhments, ariſing from the alteration of property, from the change

of

of authority, and even from the violence and bloodineſs of the Revolution. France, therefore, defending itſelf in a body upon its own ſoil, is invincible; and I beg leave to illuſtrate this by ſtating a ſuppoſition, in which I feel great pride and pleaſure; I ſhall ſuppoſe France ſubdued, and that the two overweening powers of Ruſſia and Auſtria have cruſhed and divided Pruſſia, have ſwallowed up all the Electors and petty States of Germany, and have poſſeſſed themſelves of Holland; I ſhall then ſuppoſe, that they have formed a virtuous combination to invade Great Britain, not on account of its value, but as the laſt aſylum of an appearance of liberty, which muſt ever be an eye-ſore to conquerors and tyrants; I ſhall ſuppoſe, that they invade us with the mighty force which ſuch dominions would ſupply, and it is my opinion, that if *we* felt the ſame enthuſiaſm for the defence of our country, which ſeems to prevail in France, all their united force, under the ableſt generals, could not conquer this little Iſland. And on this principle I argue, that, notwithſtanding all their power, *we* ſhould then be the *maſs*, and the invaders would be the *detachment*. Great Britain, without reckoning on aſſiſtance from Ireland, poſſeſſes above thirteen hundred thouſand fighting men; would not theſe be ſufficient to repel the united attacks of all the tyrants of the earth?

I have ſtated this argument to ſhew, that however invincible France may be in her own defence, ſhe never can be formidable to England as an invader; and this leads me to another idea. If France ſucceeds in eſtabliſhing her freedom, tho' Engliſhmen, long poſſeſſed of that ineſtimable bleſſing, may ſafely ſit on the cliffs of Dover, and behold, without fear or envy, the riſing Phœnix, yet it cannot be denied that this diſplay of example, and diffuſion of opinion, may be dangerous to the forms of other Governments in Europe. It has been long known that a great part of the inhabitants of the United States are diſcontented with their preſent conſtitution; ever ſince their diſmemberment from Spain, in which they were ſo greatly aſſiſted by the ſplendid talents and exertions of the princes of the houſe of Orange, a party has exiſted, which believes that thoſe talents were overpaid, and thoſe exertions over-rated. It is not very long ſince the great reſources of this country, moved by the tranſcendent abilities of Mr. Pitt, and the military power of Pruſſia, recent and freſh from the forming hand of the immortal Frederick, and conducted by the ſuppoſed greateſt General in the world, were thought neceſſary to controul this faction; yet, if my information be true, many of the Dutch inhabitants of the Republic ſtill wiſh to diſplace the Stadtholder. It therefore cannot

be very improbable that the intereſts of the Houſe of Orange may be ſhaken by the eſtabliſhment of a free Government in France, tho' I profeſs I cannot diſcern any danger to the men who compoſe that Republic, or to the Republic itſelf.

Germany in all its parts groans under the deſpotiſm of great or petty tyrants; the great, who ſacrifice to ambition; the little, who ſell from bloody covetouſneſs the lives of their unhappy ſubjects; no doubt can be entertained in the mind of any reaſonable man that their emancipation may follow the conſolidation of France into a Republic. Whenever Auſtria under Charles the Vth and his ſucceſſors have endeavoured to enſlave Germany, France, governed by the moſt deſpotic kings, has ſaved what were called its *liberties*; that is to ſay, it prevented one great deſpot from devouring a number of ſmaller ones. And ſuch is the charm that formerly attended this word liberty, that when the ſlaves of Saxony, Bavaria, and Bohemia, *cum multis aliis*, were contending for the private intereſts of their princes, and ſuffering every ſpecies of cruelty, taxation, degradation, and inſult, the moment they were told that they were led on for the *liberties* of Germany, they fought like heroes, and emu-

lated,

lated, perhaps equalled, the actions of their famous anceſtors under the immortal Arminius. I fear, before the concluſion of this war, more princes than one will cry out with Auguſtus, *Vare, Vare, redde legiones.*

If, however, the German love of liberty is ſo ſtrong that the mere name of it can charm them to arms, the contemplation of its reality exiſting before their eyes in actual practice, may produce great and aſtoniſhing changes in their ideas of government. *This* is the danger which ſeems to be apprehended by the Emperor and other princes in that country; they know, much better than I can explain, that there is no danger from the armies of France, that their decrees of fraternization are rhapſodies, and that their wiſeſt men feel the true extent of their national power; but the real *alarm* and *dread* is of their opinions.

From the experience of paſt ages it now ought to be admitted without controverſy, that perſecution and war can never ſtop the progreſs of opinion; it would be trite to quote the ſucceſs of Chriſtianity, and ſeveral of its ſects, againſt and in deſpite of theſe obſtacles; but I remember a ſcene in an excellent

Engliſh Comedy which fully illuſtrates this truth. An inſinuation is thrown out againſt the Miſtreſs of a Gentleman; the angry lover draws his ſword, and cries out "this ſhall ſtop the ſcandal;" his friend very judiciouſly aſks him, if he thinks he is able to ſtop the tongues of the whole town, and deſires him to *put up*. This is preciſely the advice which ought to be adopted by the ſeveral princes of Europe at preſent; if France eſtabliſhes a bad government, a deſpotic democracy, pregnant with cruelty, anarchy, violence, and oppreſſion, ſhe will not be imitated: in defence ſhe is invincible; in attack, ſhe is not to be dreaded: if, on the contrary, ſhe happily ſucceeds in proving to the world that doubtful problem, that a great nation may exiſt as an indiviſible and compact Republic; if ſhe improves by her new ſyſtem the population, induſtry, and happineſs of the human race; no combination of princes, no alliances, no wars, will or can prevent the adoption of her opinions on the Continent.

I make a great diſtinction between the effects which the happieſt event of the French Revolution is likely to produce in the reſt of Europe, and that which it will probably have on Great Britain; and I am ſure that any thinking mind which takes the pains to follow me, will agree with me.

From

From our inſular ſituation we have long been preſerved from the contagion of tyranny, and the abuſes which prevail on the Continent. We have enjoyed the beſt Conſtitution, and the greateſt ſhare of liberty that ever exiſted in any nation; we have the happineſs to have choſen a mild and beneficent Family to occupy our throne, to whom all ranks are warmly and tenderly attached; we have a Clergy, if, in the higher orders, ſomewhat too rich, yet in all, learned, pious, and exemplary; our Nobility are not oppreſſive, but generous and condeſcending. We have not the ſame grievances to goad us, nor the ſame temptations to allure us to any change in our Conſtitution, which may operate on other nations. Beſides, there ſeems to be in the order of Providence a ſort of balance preſerved in the felicity of different States as well as in that of individuals; and it is not improbable that as we have been long bleſſed with a greater proportion of Freedom than our neighbours, if liberty was to ariſe to a higher degree among them than it ever attained among us, we might ſtill remain at our preſent ſtation in the ſcale.

There is, however, one danger which might fatally overturn this flattering conjecture, namely, the effects of

of expenſive wars. After the moſt attentive peruſal of hiſtory, and a conſiderable degree of reflection, I can diſcern no cauſe of Revolutions, but oppreſſion and taxation; diſputes about thrones are not Revolutions; nothing can be dignified by that name, but a change or improvement of Conſtitution by the will of the People. Religion, it may be ſaid, has operated this effect; but let it be remembered that it was not the licentiouſneſs and abominable vices of the clergy, it was not the ſeverity of the character or the purity of the doctrines of Luther, it was not the wit and ſarcaſm of Eraſmus, nor the mild reaſon of Melanchton, that overſet the papal tyranny; it was the exorbitant *exactions* of Leo the Tenth by the ſale of indulgencies, and other modes of eccleſiaſtical greedineſs. Let it alſo be kept in mind, that the preſent French Revolution ſprang from exceſſive taxation, and the extreme miſery of the people. Man is naturally a ſluggiſh animal, and is never led by any thing but intolerable pain to change the ſituation in which he finds himſelf placed; but if ſtung to the exertion of leaving that, he generally flies to the utmoſt diſtance. I do therefore plainly aſſert that the Britiſh Conſtitution has nothing to fear from the eſtabliſhment, or the invaſion of the Republic of France, nor from the

promulgation of the doctrines of liberty throughout Europe, but it may fear its own downfal from enormous taxation, and an intolerable national debt.

This leads me to another conſideration, with which I ſhall conclude this little eſſay, and which I have not heard mentioned or diſcuſſed either in parliament, or in private converſation; I mean the probable comparative ſituation of France and England at the end of this war; ſuppoſing, as I have ſtated in my third caſe, that we mutually abſtain from hoſtilities through weakneſs and wearineſs. France, if left alone by her neighbours, will find herſelf relieved from the load of an expenſive Court, and from all national debt; ſhe will have eſtabliſhed a cheap mode of Government, and will have little or no occaſion for taxation. It may alſo be remarked from ſtrong ſymptoms, that her leading men now clearly perceive after all their convulſions, the neceſſity of religion, and order; and that the nation is evidently tending towards regularity and form. The natural wants and deſires of men, the intereſt of their rulers, and the exertions of their men of ſcience, will ſoon re-produce induſtry, manufactures, and commerce. The activity and energy which their late convulſions have occaſioned, will all act in that

new

new direction, and their conſequent ſucceſs is beyond calculation. Let us reflect, that in every country which has riſen to commercial eminence it has always been in the midſt of, or immediately after violent and bloody wars. Portugal roſe during her contention with Spain; Holland ſprang from nothingneſs while ſhe combated Philip II. and the trade of England had its commencement in the reign of Henry VII. immediately after the bloody conteſts of Lancaſter and York. This is in the order of nature; ſtruggles and difficulties create an elaſticity, which pervades and endures, until long quiet and proſperity re-produces ſloth and relaxation. France, thus invigorated and freed from the profuſion of her former Government, and delivered from the debts contracted under it, will be ſubjected to very moderate taxation; her manufactures and commerce will, therefore, inſtantly acquire an incalculable ſuperiority over thoſe of other nations, who are loaded with heavy burdens. It does not require the profound knowledge of Adam Smith to be convinced that where ſtock can be employed to the beſt advantage, it will flow thither; and where ſtock goes, men, and induſtry will follow. As ſoon therefore as the Government of that country ceaſes to be Revolutionary, and becomes tolerably ſafe and tranquil, ſhe

will

will probably ſee her wealth renewed, and her population augmented, from thoſe of her preſent neighbours and Enemies. *This* is the *conqueſt* which ſhe will atchieve by the ſimple means of a cheap Government; this is the juſt ground of *alarm*; and not thoſe fraternizing conqueſts, by her military power, which have been ſo loudly ſounded by the princes of Europe.

If ſuch will be the probable condition of France at the commencement of her new æra, what is likely to be that of Great Britain at the ſame period? My heart bleeds when I ſay, it will be directly the reverſe. I ſhall not impute to any perſons who may then have the guidance of our affairs, any want of virtue, wiſdom, or œconomy; I ſhall believe them willing and able to make the greateſt efforts for our preſervation, and reſtoration; but what will be their materials to work with? It is almoſt certain, that, at the termination of this war, the national debt will greatly exceed three hundred millions: and we ſhall be happy if we are able to pay the intereſt of this, and our peace eſtabliſhment, by an annual taxation of two or three and twenty millions. This prodigious burden will become the more intolerable by the contemplation of our neareſt neighbour and ancient enemy, a nation

with thrice our population, almoſt entirely freed from taxation, and conſequently enabled infinitely to underſell us in every commodity, and in every market. The inevitable conſequences of theſe circumſtances will be the loſs of our manufactures, the decay of our commerce, and the decreaſe of our people; and with this loſs of manufactures, decay of commerce, and diminution of inhabitants, the ſame burdens will remain to be borne.

I ſhall conclude with a ſincere wiſh that our interference in the internal affairs of another nation, may not produce to ourſelves, national bankruptcy, and final ruin; and I pray God to illuminate the minds of the Parliament and the people, with the knowledge of the true cauſes, and juſt grounds of REAL ALARM!

FINIS.